



# *A Gorgeous Mistake*

*Andreas Gripp*

# **A Gorgeous Mistake**

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# **A Gorgeous Mistake**

Andreas Gripp

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London

*A Gorgeous Mistake*

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**Email:** [beliveaubooks@gmail.com](mailto:beliveaubooks@gmail.com)

**Website:** [beliveaubooks.wixsite.com/home](http://beliveaubooks.wixsite.com/home)

**Author Website:**

[andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp](http://andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp)

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## Acknowledgements

Once again, I wish I could take credit for my book title, but this time it's taken from the lyrics of a Sinéad O'Connor song called *Jump in the River*. My poem which bears the same title as this chapbook, *A Gorgeous Mistake*, was originally published in 2021 as *Sometimes*, written under the pseudonym of D.G. Foley.

Earlier versions of *Tall*, *Staying After School*, *Chick Tracts*, and *Orbit Obit* were also written under the D.G. Foley pen name, appearing in the 2021 chapbook, *ghosts & other poems*.

A previous version of *A Cisgender Pre-Millennialist Visits La Communista Café* was published in my book, *Panthera Leo*, in 2017.

*From the Trees, A Song* is a brand new reworking of my 2022 poem *101 Yellow Petals*, which was first published in the anthology, *Poems in Response to Peril: An Anthology in Support of Ukraine* (Penn Kemp and Richard-Yves Sitoski, eds.).

I've made 2024 revisions to my 2019 poem, *Covenants*. I think it's better now and is included here for no one's enjoyment.

The other six poems in this collection: *Humidex 54*, *Dinosaurs or If It Weren't for Adolf Hitler*, *Memes or Now It's Called Eswatini*, *Profanity*, *White*, and *Finalis* have been newly written from scratch during this Summer of 2024—the year that I'm here, then gone.

### **Note**

Please read these poems *carefully* or not at all.





## **A Gorgeous Mistake**

Sometimes my neighbour,  
39 going on 50,  
posts photos of her near-  
nude self on Insta:  
twerking, wearing as little  
as she can get away with  
on TikTok, but only  
leaves the house to grab the mail.

Maybe it's just a bill,  
from the mortician who buried  
her husband 9 1/2 weeks ago,  
a letter from the woman  
who was her lover before she wed,  
asking why she can't move in  
now that Ed is dead,

all the while wondering  
why she only got seven likes for a vid  
she wanted to delete as soon as it was  
posted, all from the same dude with six  
sock puppet accounts and a penchant  
for widows baring themselves for a smart-  
phone camera, why none of the pervs  
give a fuck that the grave has yet to be  
seeded, the weather a perfect mix  
of sun and then cloud and then rain.

## Humidex 54

We hear it's getting  
hotter, our eyes that look  
to the atmosphere alight;

our star's becoming brighter  
we surmise, though it isn't even  
half-an-inch  
closer than before. We can't see  
the carbon filling  
skies like lungs with smoke.

There was a time  
the fires were small:

to cook a trout,  
to keep from  
being *cold*  
in the coal of  
night. Now, B.C.  
is ablaze, and another  
starlet's mansion  
is consumed.

It could be worse, you say—  
we could be pilgrims  
doing circles  
down in Mecca,

robed from head to foot,  
or roofers hauling shingles  
in our sweat,  
the streams of which  
taste bitter  
like Deadeast Sea,

when blinding sun  
and sorrow are the same,  
*brothers of another  
mother,*

when all beneath the surface  
comes to burn—water then coral  
then fish—

when all around us  
swirls like a malted  
shake, loosened  
in the melt,

frothing like a madman  
in the clouds, a wave that's  
run amok  
and drowning millions.

## Tall

Whatever happened to  
the stuffed giraffe  
I bought for you on a  
whim, its neck and head  
rising well above the lion's,  
the rhino's, the gorilla with  
its fists locked in a  
faux beating of chest?

Was it the victim of your  
move to a basement  
with a low ceiling? Was it too  
gentle to survive amid the  
carnivorous, eaten not because  
of the taste of its slender  
physique, but out of jealousy,  
envy, the bitterness brought  
out whenever it saw its human  
coming up the drive behind  
the bushes always blocking  
the view of those who say  
they can see but never do?

## **Staying After School**

Teacher tells me Josiah Sam was hung  
for stealing his master's chicken.  
I say it wasn't just the bird but the eggs  
that would have hatched otherwise.  
I get a detention for knowing the dif-  
ference between want and need.  
For not-shutting-the-fuck-  
up about fried and scrambled  
and how there wasn't any time  
during the dawn before the slave-  
work was expected to be done,  
hands a blackened  
Black before our star blazed  
through the morning fog  
like a lighthouse on the rocks  
above the sea.

**Dinosaurs**  
**or If It Weren't for Adolf Hitler**

I owe my grand  
existence  
to a jagged  
asteroid—

to a circle  
that surrounds  
the *Yucatan*,  
the crater of  
Chicxulub;

to all the fossils  
who didn't adapt,  
had failed  
to be the fittest  
when it mattered.

I would surely  
not be alive  
if not for Hitler,  
my father staying  
put in a German town,  
my mother in a village  
of Ukraine,  
never crossing paths  
in an *English* class,

in a London  
of another sort.

I have always  
hated Hitler  
for *Holocaust*,  
Dresden but a cinder  
because of *him*  
and his paintings *spurned*,  
Europe a steaming  
rubble felling millions.

My Italian friends  
don't realize  
if it wasn't for  
Mussolini, they'd have never  
cried at birth.

Look at Hiroshima  
standing tall—  
unscorched by  
Enola Gay,  
half a billion  
people that come and  
go, the interchange of  
faces, the names that  
disappear with sleight  
of hand,



replaced by happy  
children  
we'll never know.

We are  
ultimately born  
of *tragedy*:

the driver just  
ahead  
taking the impact  
nearly *mine*,  
surviving by the  
luck  
of a random turn.

You say your  
*baby* owes her breath  
to a brutal rape,  
your dog no  
longer there  
because the first  
to tame a wolf  
had lost a hand  
to a famished bear—  
forty thousand years  
before the Christ.

This isn't just an  
anthem of the past—  
watch the *roll*  
of future dice, their  
crash against the wall:

the ocean-  
dweller *creeping*  
from the shore,  
the silence of the land,  
absent of beast  
and man,

eyeing remnants  
of a city  
long extinct,  
grateful that we've  
*finally* disappeared,  
its initial step  
like a human's  
on the moon,

still rising  
on the drapes  
of burning sky,  
a ball of  
nonchalance,  
its face of bleached  
indifference.

**A Cisgender Pre-Millennialist  
Visits *La Communista Café***

You'd be enamoured  
with the grrl of the Antifa  
were it not for her coarse tattoos,  
the buttons of red/black fist  
and Maoist star,

were it not for the fact  
there's hair sprouting every-  
where but on her head  
(though you'd *never*  
admit to such a stupid,  
sexist thought).

*Propaghandi* still tops  
her playlist—she's got the hots  
for their raging “singer”—  
though she's walked in the  
downtown Pride Parade  
with another *woman*  
she's Frenched it with.

It's simply her angelic sound of voice  
in those moments she isn't screaming;  
how in a solemn sliver of sunlight  
on this migraine-rainy morning,

behind the counter  
from where she baristas,  
with Che Guevara  
looking away  
in a vermillion monochrome,

she spoke of *Revolution*,

not of uprising on the streets  
or some tired, hashtag trend,  
but the way the Earth  
was being pulled  
around its mother,  
a child now bereft  
of its green, its hegemonized  
people of colour,  
its privileged *white*  
and one-percent,  
its wars  
and rumours of wars—

that gravity would be *just*  
in breaking its law,  
that rapture  
is what *lovers* have  
when they've both been left behind.

## Chick Tracts

Once, they were in my teenaged  
hands—brimming with brimstone,  
laughs unintended.

The drawings were decent, I'd have  
to admit, and the hell-fearing artist  
would have been capable at Marvel,  
DC, or even Gold Key comics.

But why *sketch* a red-caped  
man when you can pencil  
shooting flames, a molten/volcanic  
lake, *filled* with un-  
believers,

the fornicators  
and the gay, crying for someone  
to give us water, a drop on the  
tongue that cools;

or maybe a flying hero  
capable of salvation,  
who pours a jug of *Culligan*  
on our heads, hair ablaze  
in this otherwise dark universe,  
being bright and shining lights  
in our own, degenerate way.

## From the Trees, A Song

The sunflowers in my sunroom  
are undisturbed. No shelling  
of the land around them,  
debris to bury their stems.

There's no layer  
of chalky dust  
to lie upon  
each petal,  
to discolour their  
Sol-like mimicry,

a reminder that  
one-hundred more  
children have just been killed,  
six million plus have fled.

There will be no varenyky  
today, the cabbage rolls  
have no meat. I will remember  
you all, our *heroiam*,  
in the breaking of the bread,  
so crusty and so hard,

the crumbs to feed  
the warblers, feathered  
in yellow-blue,  
trilling *Slava, Slava*,  
*Slava Ukraini*

### Orbit Obit.

I read about all the  
space junk circling  
Earth, and that lots  
of the spy satellites  
are due to bump  
*into* one another, crash  
and burn if they do catch  
fire and if not,  
*pray* if you believe in  
God and if not, just  
watch your fucking head—

an umbrella won't do  
you any good  
when it's crushed and  
yourself with it,  
like the proverbial one-  
hundred-pound hailstones  
from the Book of Revelation  
and you not being around  
for the Russian-American  
fights that will follow,  
India, China, facing off  
to face the winner  
and everyone too busy  
*watching* to even dig you  
a goddamn grave.

## Memes, or Now It's Called Eswatini

There's supposedly  
a desk  
at the airport  
in Vienna,

for travellers  
arriving there  
in err,

mistaking Austria for  
*Australia*,  
dressed for the  
desert outback,

wondering if they've  
counterparts  
who've made  
a similar blunder,  
traipsing about  
in Sydney, garbed in  
Lederhosen,  
yodelling to the koalas  
and the bobbing kangaroos.

Then there's the skier  
and St. Bernard  
who booked a *flight*  
to Swaziland—



toasting Africans  
with their brandy  
on the runway,  
where they heard  
it hadn't snowed  
in sixty years.

But I was the *fool*  
of them all,  
signing up to learn  
some Javanese,

hoping to land  
my dream job  
in the halls of *Toho Co*,  
animate *Godzilla*  
for the screen,

or write a poem  
of Nagasaki  
for my students,

be a turnabout  
*Tokyo Rose*,  
tell them all on TikTok  
it's *America* who's  
victorious at the end,

my ignorance a bliss,  
taking the *bewilderment*  
on their faces  
to be a look of  
wondrous awe,

each bow  
a reverent blessing  
from the land of  
the rising sun,

a meagre fifty-  
thousand k's  
from a lengthy  
island near Borneo,

where, I'll be told,  
they're still expecting  
my arrival, a limo  
ready to take me  
to wherever I'd like to go.

## Profanity

You'd never sworn  
*before* in your life,  
no matter the pain  
from the hammer on your  
thumb;

the dolts who  
cut you off  
in traffic; that time  
you dropped the roses  
on the floor—splash of *water*  
and splintered vase.

You've never uttered  
the Name of the Lord  
in vain, never added *Murphy*—  
or Mary and Joseph too;

never snuck in *scheisse!*—  
even when apropos,  
never taking a chance  
that there's a *German*  
within an ear-shot;

and you've never  
used the *expletive*  
that precedes the word *off*.

So please pardon  
my surprise, my  
utter astonishment,  
when you winced  
after that first  
taste of beer,

on the patio  
at the club,  
saying—very audibly—  
*it's piss warm,*

akin to a yellow  
of another kind—  
that colour  
in the rainbow,  
its arc toward  
the ground,

the relief you feel  
when you've waited so  
long on the highway,  
surrounded by sirens  
in the sun,

unable to *think*  
of anything else,  
even with the vehicle *ahead*  
all aflame.

## White

These lines are only filler.  
Beware of the feeble metaphors  
that follow just below.

There was a single, empty  
page in this newest book,  
a snow squall's *avalanche*,  
a spreading blob of *vanilla*  
from a scoop of Ben & Jerry's.

This poem you might be reading  
clearly sucks. And saying that it *sucks*  
makes it even more insipid.

What's that?  
I should have *left it*  
as it was? Feigning *profundity*?

Then what would I do if it  
happens once again? Risen  
like a Messiah from a tomb,

blinding with a brilliance  
I'd *convey*, if I'd never  
run out of room—like I *have*  
in this senseless,  
ridiculous moment.

## Covenants

The socialists are gonna kill me.  
This isn't literal, or it might be,  
it depends on how much I've had  
in ratio of Tequila to Twitter,  
of Instagramming crosses  
and Bible paper and red-slashing  
their hammer-and-sickle icon  
I refuse to march behind  
when protesting the bulldozing  
of sweat lodges and animal traps  
I don't really like anyway—  
only because I can't stand  
humidity while the metal-mouthed,  
teeth-clenched hanger-on of  
furry limb (that would flee to liberty  
if it only could) is innately cruel,  
but then my Indigenous  
brothers need to survive too  
and who am I to Monday-sermon  
them to the point of unfriending  
and mute? And the traps aren't made  
like that anyway, you say.

Point taken and Unist'ot'en is where  
my spirit would stand if I had one  
which Hitchens would scream is nonsense  
if he were alive and would his ghost  
admit he was wrong all along?

I shoved the sacred  
tobacco in my glove  
when an Anishinabek elder  
offered it to me on a cold-as-fuck  
afternoon and the tea I just had  
failed to do its trick. It was his idea  
and I'm ever one to acquiesce.  
The sensation wasn't as grating  
as expected—much less than the  
Ashes of Wednesday that kick off Lent  
and I cussed each and every day  
after I boasted I'd give up the booze.  
Even the Rector regretted his promise.

But I digress—the Soviet emblem  
was nowhere to be seen  
and I admire the strength of beauty  
on the majestic, Mohawk  
standard. Never a mascot. Ever.

Self-flagellants of Dutch descent  
*say fearless Joseph? Misunderstood.*  
The Pierogi was undercooked  
and Stalin's chef, a Bourgeoisie.  
If your ravioli-in-a-can  
can't Italian, can Crimea  
stay Khrushchev's gift?

“Holodomor is an American Lie” but Ukrainians aren’t Jews so I can’t accuse you of anything. White-on-white isn’t racism and bigotry’s a pun on words.

I tapped along the way  
to your exhibit, on Dundas,  
‘cause “innovation” is how it works  
and the King is just a block around  
the bender. You say it was meant  
for *Pride*, that the mofo had mis-  
gendered you, that the poets  
are giving you a second chance  
even if they barely glance.  
Look at them, at the open mic,  
how they’re crafty  
in their beer. My granddad too  
wore plaid but his beard  
was bottom-trimmed.  
He should’ve gone electric.  
The sons of Cossacks  
killed him, y’know.

You told me once  
you read my zines,



how collage was just a puzzle  
high on glue. The horse-race went to  
*Paradigm*, mine rabbit-slept, gun-  
shy.

You're surprised I've grown  
my hair, that I didn't  
exchange the Fedora  
for a line  
of MAGA hats—  
and how could I,  
when the orange dotard's Kimchi  
is P'yŏngyang-laced?  
Elton John was forced to cringe  
when *Rocket Man* was named.  
Bernie Sanders  
shared the credit  
but Taupin wrote the tune—  
feel the burn of your mis-  
taken.

I'll await your wokened grovel,  
the "I'm listening"  
alit by torch. Apologies  
unaccepted by the flash  
of mob appeal.

And we thought  
*Frankenstein* had it bad.  
The flower-girl,  
*tossed* in the pond  
head-first, deleted  
like a circumcision's  
precision *cut*.  
The director's lovechild  
howls to this day. Even  
Solomon would've cupped  
his ears. Not David's  
son but Ginsberg's muse.  
It only goes to show  
that the straitjacket  
was unnecessary. A hairshirt  
would've done.

The border guards  
are Sergeant Schultz  
and the Wall is just a rubble  
of Lego blocks,  
hidden in the  
shags of golden carpet, like landmines  
in Vietnam—even the caravans  
of Juan Guaidó  
won't risk it  
just-in-socks.

I'll give them my holey  
shoes, barely scuffed,  
and the boy who blacks them up  
is as *blond* as the village-damned.  
Look into his eyes—closer.  
They're not aglow, you see,  
nor Necronomicon demonic.  
He's only reflecting sunlight  
that shines on the bad  
and on the good,  
and I wanted to Jesus-quote  
to show I'm still a fan of his,  
on the days my *in-*  
*fidelity* is frail.

You frothed and foamed  
at the jaw  
when you read my untimely  
interview,  
my slandering of academia,  
that it's garish bafflegab,  
their verse, *spouted*  
by Commie demagogues  
in cliques. We cold-shouldered  
each other for days.

When I creeped your profile  
on AssFace, yours  
was just as phoney  
as the rest—  
quinoa/greens aplenty,  
your obligatory bikini  
pics from Cuba  
(unless you were in Bayfield  
all the while and had *filtered*  
the beach to hell),  
*regurgitating* gifs and memes  
I've seen a thousand times already.  
And. putting. a. period.  
after. every. fucking. word. does. not.  
make. it. profound.  
And please, *Full Stop*  
is always neither.

You asked me if I checked you out,  
your steamy summer selfies.  
I say that sex with someone you hate  
is the most *exciting*  
of all, that the feigning of love  
is a reality deeper  
than the secret spaces  
of your body—

that no, I didn't look,  
or if I did, I didn't imagine  
us together. We'd tear at  
each other's throats  
and then pass them off as hickeys.  
I have breasts of my own—  
what need have I of yours?  
But that's from all the *faggot*  
jokes I was forced to hear  
in school. Whenever I whipped  
off my top, I wondered  
if it was true.

I'm in love with my wife.  
As enticing as you think you are,  
I'd never take the bait. But never  
say never (again): we're Bond-  
ed by lust and loathing.  
When Belle & Sebastian  
called it right, that  
you want to be left alone  
with Marx & Engels for a while,  
I should've paused  
before sharing the Gospel—  
John's, Matthew's,

or from your favourite,  
Mao Tse-Tung  
(though he'd never confess  
the Christ). See, even atheists  
bow the knee to some supposed  
incarnation. When they placed him  
in a state of State,  
they might have brushed  
his teeth at least. That's why he never  
smiled, I tell you. When we think  
we're all the same, then who is  
beautiful?

## Finalis

I will write this  
accursed piece  
while waiting to  
pass away—

*die*, I like to  
say, deflowered  
and right to the  
point. It's not an  
*apple* to be candied.

Take the forbidden  
*bite* before the worm  
has reached the core,  
before your god  
decrees you can't.

I'll plant *dandelions*  
from their seed,  
snatch their wispy  
white afloat  
before the breeze  
issues an edict  
where they might  
and mightn't thrive,  
where bees *can*  
and can't reject them;

where children may  
dance with a dozen  
in their hair

or trod them beneath  
their soles,  
make them the *last*  
of their generation,  
their sunlike  
visage *ground*  
into the dirt,

like the boy who  
cries he loves you,

whom you never saw  
again  
after hearing that  
damned confession,  
after the sneering  
with your friends,

your heart blown  
about  
like a wish  
amid the rocks  
beneath the clouds.





The author of over 30 books of poetry, as well as one of short fiction and another of art & photography, Andreas Gripp lives in London, Ontario, with his wife, Carrie.



## Beliveau Books

### Poetry

"Andreas Gripp's poetry is always faithful to a core of sensible literary values and to the reader who looks for them ... combining dramatic format, lyricism, and allusion – and yet despite its 'classicism,' has the most accessible language, all of which makes for an interesting poetics."

— Conrad DiDiodato, author of *Bridget Bird and other poems* (Serengeti Press)

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